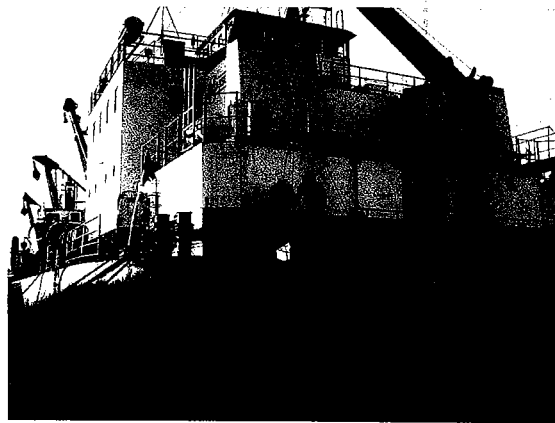


FINAL REPORT

Marine Endangered Species Monitoring Program

**US Army Corps of Engineers
Norfolk District**

**Cape Henry Channel
Virginia Beach, Virginia
Dates: 17 Sep-30 Nov 2001**



Submitted by:

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ABSTRACT

A twelve-hour-a-day marine endangered species monitoring program was conducted onboard the hopper dredges *Newport* and *Bayport* during the Cape Henry Channel maintenance dredging project from 17 September through 30 November 2001. Endangered and threatened sea turtles were the species targeted. A total of 4 incidents were recorded in which all/or parts of these species were found. A Kemp's Ridley was taken on 10 October and as a precaution trawling was initiated in order to reduce the chance of reaching the take limit for this particular species of sea turtle.

INTRODUCTION

The observer program to monitor the impact of dredging on endangered species in the area of dredge operations was conducted in response to US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) maintenance dredging project in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Pursuant to agreements with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), a certified observer was required onboard during the months of prime sea turtle activity for that area to document any detected incidents involving target species. This window was defined in the "National Marine Fisheries Service's Biological Opinion on the impacts of the Army Corps of Engineers Norfolk District's hopper dredging in the Thimble Shoal Channel and Atlantic Ocean Channel related to the hurricane project at Virginia Beach, Virginia, on threatened and endangered species under NMFS' jurisdiction."

SCOPE OF WORK

REMSA, Inc. was subcontracted by Manson Construction to conduct the observer program for the project. **REMSA** was to provide the necessary trained personnel and equipment to clean and monitor inflow screens onboard the hopper dredges *Newport* and *Bayport* and to provide the necessary reports. Monitoring was to be performed 12 hours each day from 17 September through 30 November 2001. Observers were to inspect and clean all inflow and overflow screens, and to inspect both dragheads each time they were brought on deck

for cleaning and maintenance. Any death or injury involving target species required the evidence to be identified, logged, measured, and photographed. Disposal of any animals recovered was to be the responsibility of the observer and dredge personnel. Target species included the loggerhead turtle (Caretta caretta), green turtle (Chelonia mydas), Kemp's ridley turtle (Lepidochelys kempii), leatherback turtle (Dermochelys coriacea), and hawksbill turtles (Eretmochelys imbricata). A load sheet was to be completed for each load whether or not turtle parts were found. In the case of an incident involving a sea turtle, an incident report form was to be completed. These forms were to be provided by the dredging contractor. A daylight bridge watch was to be conducted during periods when the observer was not occupied with screen cleaning duties. Observers were to be certain that dredge crew personnel were aware of the need to avoid incidents involving any endangered animal, and that civil and criminal penalties are possible for harming or harassing endangered species.

METHODS

Dredging by the hopper dredge *Bayport* in Cape Henry Channel began when the observer arrived onboard on 17 September 2001. Observer duties were completed on 30 November as instructed in the biological opinion (Loads 1-444). Dredging by the hopper dredge *Newport* in Cape Henry Channel began when the observer arrived onboard on 28 October 2001 and continued through 25 November (Loads 1-107). One trained observer was present onboard each dredge during all dredging operations working 12 hours each day. Names and addresses of observers are furnished in the Appendix.

The *Bayport* and *Newport* functioned with 100% inflow screening with sea turtle draghead deflectors being used. The screening baskets were fitted with 4" x 4" screening material to insure that and parts of the targeted species would not be allowed to flow through into the hopper. All dragheads and screening baskets were checked after each load of the observers 12-hour shift and the appropriate form was filled out.

A bridge lookout was maintained during those daylight hours that the observer was not on deck checking screens and was on duty. Watch was kept for turtles in the dredging area and pumpout station.

RESULTS

Take 1

Date: 9/26/01 Time: 1930
Species: *Caretta caretta*
Vessel: Dredge Bayport
Load: 069
Fresh Specimen

Take 2

Date: 10/10/01 Time: 1532
Species: *Lepidochelys kempi*
Vessel: Bayport
Load: 156
Fresh Specimen

Take 3

Date: 10/17/01 Time: 1420
Species: *Caretta caretta*
Vessel: Bayport
Load: 198
Fresh Specimen

Take 4

Date: 11/02/01 Time: 1315
Species: Unknown
Vessel: Newport
Load: 20
Old Rib Bone

DISCUSSION

The dredging project in Cape Henry channel in Virginia Beach, Virginia resulted in four separate sea turtle incidents. Of these four, three incidents involved fresh specimens.

Sea turtle relocation trawling was recommended after the second take on 10 October. Trawling began on 13 October and continued through 12 November. Trawling was conducted for 12 hours per day as the dredges worked simultaneously for 24 hours. On 17 October, the dredge *Bayport* took a Loggerhead as the trawler was making its first tow of the day. It is possible that this take could have been avoided if trawling was done 24 hours as opposed to twelve.

On 4 November, the observer onboard the dredge *Bayport*, Duncan Newberry, reported finding an unidentified bone. The bone was brought to the REMSA MESO Laboratory on 30 November and was positively identified as a human radius on 10 January 2002. The Corps of Engineers was notified and the bone was turned over to Officer Jeffery Copperthite of the Virginia Marine Patrol (757) 247-2266.

REMSA highly recommends that observer coverage in the state of Virginia be increased to 24 hour coverage from April-November for sea turtles and 12 hour (daylight bridge watch) coverage for Northern Right Whales from November through February. If this project is exceeds the established take limit again this spring, relocation trawling has proven to be effective and should be initiated.

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LIST OF OBSERVERS

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